

The Philippian Letter

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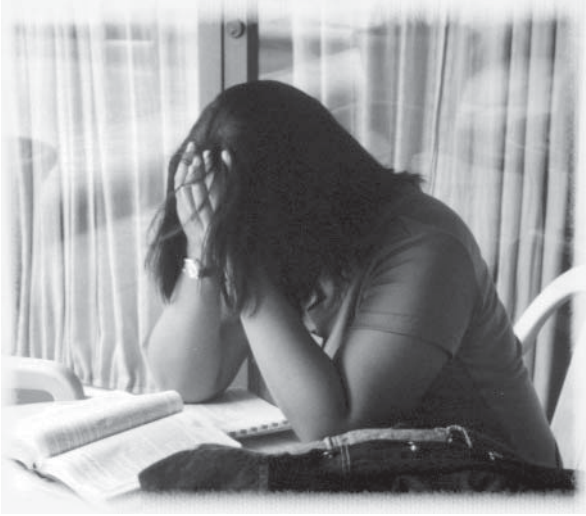
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Filippino Gigie Carranza, our Missionary Ambassador to Mexico, prays during Silence, Solitude, and Prayer time in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2003.

The Practice of Silence, Solitude, & Prayer

Silence, Solitude, and Prayer exercises immediately follow this page. They were designed to help you discover some of the fundamental truths Paul holds most dear—those on which he relies when addressing specific life situations. Each exercise will focus on “unpacking” a few verses of text and include:

- Preparation and Praise
- Study
- Reflection and Prayer

Please **read Philippians in its entirety prior to beginning each exercise.**

Perspective:

Ever had a season of wandering? Ever experienced a time when so many things were going wrong that you decided you must have taken a wrong turn? Had you started for Tarshish when the Lord said Ninevah? Had you denied His command to cross the Jordan because the journey looked too treacherous? Are you on one of those journeys now? Acts 16 finds Paul on his "second missionary journey." He had **planned** to preach in Asia, but he couldn't, so he traveled around in the region of Phrygia and Galatia, to the northeast. He made **plans** to enter Bithynia (moving northwest), but "the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them." So, they went to Troas (due west). Then in the night, he saw a "vision" of a beckoning man: "Come over to Macedonia (further west) and help us." The NIV says, Paul "concluded" God had called them to Macedonia. The NRSV says that after the vision, he and his companions were "convinced." However you read it, there was nothing simple about the experience—it was just a group of men, interpreting circumstance through the eyes of faith.

If Paul expected life to settle down when he reached Macedonia, he was mistaken. In Philippi, he was harassed, jailed and asked to leave town. In Thessalonica, his teaching started a riot. They could not remain in Berea, either. Finally, they left Macedonia.

How does one judge the providence of God? How do you know that you are "concluding" correctly? How do you determine what the Holy Spirit "won't allow?" How can we be **confident** that we walk as He intended?

I am confident God will

Silence, Solitude, & Prayer

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1.6, NRSV

Praise and Prepare:

- Close your eyes and recognize God's presence.
- Ask Him to bless this time, to guard your heart, guide your mind, and grant you the opportunity to hear Him.

Study: Read **Philippians in its entirety** from the **New Revised Standard Version** (pink copy). Attempt to hear the book as if Paul were speaking directly to you. As you read, listen for **Paul's perspective of God**. What role does this God play in ensuring that His will is accomplished?

Compare Paul's confidence in 1.6 with his statements in 1.14, 2.24, and 3.3-4. What can be said of this confidence of which Paul writes?

For Paul, the cross becomes the ultimate tutorial for the Christian walk. In 2.5-8, Paul urges the Philippians to have the "same mind" as Christ. Jot down those things Christ does that Christians should seek to imitate.

Notice, however, that in verses 9-11, it is God who exalts Jesus, ultimately bringing about the Father's own glory. Question: Why is it significant that the decision to exalt Jesus is God's **decision**? Contemplate the fact that God's exaltation of Jesus results in glory for the Father. What can we learn about glory and honor and sacrifice from these verses?

Paul wants us to recognize the role God Himself plays in facilitating our walk with Him. Read each of the following texts. In each one, Paul urges Christians to contribute to their witness in a variety of ways. He also speaks about God's role in the lives or witnesses of those believers.

Text	Believer's Contribution	God's Contribution
1.27-28		
2.12-13		
4.4-7		
4.13		

Reflect If it is God who testifies to others through my life (1.28), and if it is God who works in me to do good and to **desire** to do good (2.12-13), and if it is God's peace that I receive that protects my heart and mind (4.4-7), and if it is His strength that enables me to do **all things** (4.13), how is it possible that I yet lack confidence in my Christian walk?

How does realizing these truths change my ideas about God and His perception of me and my service?

How might my attitude toward other Christians change if I claimed these promises not only in my own life, but also for the lives of those I know?

Pray:

- **Praise** Him for being God.
- **Confess.** What fears, arrogance, disobedience, or unwillingness to trust hinders your witness? Confess your belief that He will be faithful.
- **Thank Him** for the opportunity to know Him better through this struggle.
- **Ask** to experience the power and peace He intends as He contributes to your Christian walk.
- **Be still**—do you have a few more minutes to sit in His presence?

Perspective:

The first time I was in Brazil, I bought a cross cut from stone—the same color as my birthstone. I wear another cross on my Come before Winter bracelet, a reminder of the fellowship and mission I share with the team and all of you. I own another—a gift given to me at the conclusion of a Ladies' Retreat where I had spoken about Calvary. All of my crosses are beautiful; there is nothing hideous about any of them, and when I look at them, I see a beautiful message. I see the love of my Lord—for His Father and for me; I see His obedience and my salvation.

I know that any woman who wants to be like Jesus must take up her cross and follow Him. I realize crosses are instruments of death, and I recognize that my cross—the one I would pick up to imitate Jesus—would be the instrument of my death. It would become the place where Karen dies—the place where her desires, her goals and her pride are transformed into His desires, His goals, and His glory. When I take my last breath on that cross, then I will be like Jesus.

So far, I find it difficult to celebrate this ongoing crucifixion. I can't locate a cross that bears a representative image, and if I did, I likely wouldn't put it on my wall or wear it on my bracelet. I can't yet grasp this crucifixion as Paul would like: "God gave you the HONOR not only of believing in Christ, but ALSO of suffering for him, both of which bring glory to Christ." (Philippians 1.29-30, NCV). God help me. I so want to be like Jesus. I want to love the hideous cross of my own crucifixion, to suffer and die there and somehow to glorify the One I love.

I am granted to suffer God did

Silence, Solitude, & Prayer

I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Praise and Prepare:

Philippians 3.8,10-11, New American Standard

- Close your eyes and recognize God's presence.
- Ask Him to bless this time, to guard your heart, guide your mind, and grant you the opportunity to hear Him.

Study: Read **Philippians in its entirety** from the **New American Standard** (green copy) with an eye toward Paul's understanding of the cross as an ongoing experience—that is, self-sacrifice.

Paul claims there is nothing he will not give to acquire his most valued, sought-after treasure—fully knowing Christ (see 3.8-11). In a hymn, he describes this Christ he seeks to know intimately. Read 2.5-11 once more. Which part of this hymn strikes you the most? Why?

The hymn describes Christ's sacrifice which began with His willingness to surrender His right to be recognized for who He truly was—equal to God Himself. But that was only the beginning. Use the spaces below to identify the steps in this ever-intensifying, humbling surrender. Note that each step requires further surrender.

(He) _____ Himself (2:7)

--->

taking the _____ of a _____, being made in

the _____ of _____.

-->

Being found in _____ as a _____, (2:8)

-->

He _____ himself

by becoming _____ to the point of

_____,

-->

even _____ on a _____.

Paul includes the Christ hymn as amplification for the point he begins in 1.27. What is that point?

Why must a Christian grasp the picture of Christ presented in the hymn in order to fulfill the exhortation of Paul in 1.27.

Jesus was first and foremost the Son of God—he **existed** in the form of **God.** What fundamental belief, then, enabled Him to view His identity in such a way that he was capable of this type sacrifice? Review 2.6.

Paul writes throughout the letter of those he calls selfish, ambitious, and proud. Evidently, these men taught that circumcision--the sacrifice of a piece of one's body--was the mark of a Christian, as well as a Jew (see 3.2-3). Paul, however, claims that the distinctive sacrifice of a Christian has nothing to do with a body part. He writes, "We are the true circumcision...." Read 3.3. What do Christians give up that makes us "truly circumcised?" What do we possess that enables us to truly worship God?

Reflect: Consider the questions listed in the box to the right. What parts of your identity are you finding most difficult to surrender?

Pray:

- **Praise** God for loving the unlovable.
- **Confess.** What gifts, rights, talents, or qualities might you be hoarding?
Confess your belief that He can help you surrender.
- **Thank Him** for the opportunity to know Him better through this struggle.
- **Ask** to experience the power and the peace of the cross—that you would truly KNOW Christ.
- **Be still**—do you have a few more minutes to sit in His presence?

Reflect



Take a moment to jot down a few aspects of your identity for which you could easily take pride. (Paul does this in 3.4-6.) After you make your list, put a star by the one(s) that you believe are most basic to your self identity.

Think back over the last week or so. List 2-3 conflicts you experienced during this time (include times you were angry or hurt). Are there those with whom you regularly experience conflict or tension?

Consider these conflicts and people. In what way(s) do each of these conflicts or people represent a challenge to your identity?

Perspective:

Few men have influenced the world more than Alexander the Great, the mighty conquering warrior who sprang from Macedonia in the 4th century BC, conquering most of the known world. Considered a genius in battle, young Alexander perfected a theory of warfare first conceived by his father, Philip of Macedon, a generation earlier. **The Greek Phalanx** spelled destruction for all its enemies. Creating a column of at least 100 men, ten men across and ten men deep, this formation was the “heavy infantry” of its time because soldiers wore armor on their chests, forearms, and shins, plus a metal helmet. Moving in tightly packed ranks with the cohesion of one man, their large shields overlapped—leaving no entry point for incoming munitions. Warriors carried specially designed lances, six to twelve feet long and short swords. No enemy could withstand the attack of the phalanx, and no army of the day would succeed against it. Using this technique, Macedonia was transformed from a sleepy, insignificant province to an important military power that conquered both the Athenians and the Spartans and united a struggling group of Greek city states into one cohesive power.

Paul told the Macedonian Philippians to stand firm, “in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation.”

1.27–28; NRS

Stand firm in fellowship Christ unites

Silence, Solitude, & Prayer

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2.1-4; New International Version

Praise and Prepare:

- Close your eyes and recognize God's presence.
- Ask Him to bless this time, to guard your heart, guide your mind, and grant you the opportunity to hear Him.

Study: Read Philippians in its entirety from the New International Version (blue copy) with an eye toward the body of Christ and its stance in this world.

Mark Phil. 2.1-4 (above) as follows.

Draw a box around the word “if.”

Circle the word “any” each time it appears **and underline** the phrases that immediately follow it.

Underline the phrases following “then” which begin with “ing” words, such as “being like-minded.”

Draw boxes around the words “Do nothing” and “but.”

List the blessings that Paul says come from being one with Jesus and His Spirit (2:1).

Though I may feel blessed in varying degrees by my association with Christ, *how blessed* must I feel before I determine that Paul is exhorting me to respond to his exhortations in these verses? (vs. 1)

If Paul can be used as an example, how might a Christian multiply the joy to be gained from the encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, and compassion you receive from your fellowship with Jesus? (see vs. 2)

Our modern conception often makes “vanity” and “conceit” synonyms, when in fact, “conceit” is an “exaggerated opinion of oneself.” “Vanity” means “worthless, empty, or hollow.” Why do you think the words came to be synonymous in modern English?

2.3-4 urges Christians to look beyond ourselves in three ways. Examine the Christ hymn once more. (It immediately follows this text.) Find examples (verses 6-8) of how Christ exemplified all these exhortations.

1) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit	
2) Consider others better than yourself	
3) Look...to the interests of others	

2.3 tells us not to **do** anything out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but to **consider** others better than ourselves. Compare the instructions in 2.1-4 to those offered in 4.8-9. What role do my thoughts play in my actions toward others? ...in the peace I find in my relationship with God?

Consider 1.27-30. Why is it imperative to the cause of Christ that I take seriously Paul’s exhortations to unite with all believers?

Pray:

- **Praise** God for the diversity of His creatures.
- **Confess** any encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, and compassion you have received through your bond with Christ.
- **Confess** the ways that your love is not yet like His.
- **Thank Him** for the opportunity to know Him better through this struggle.
- **Ask** God to open your heart to those with whom you find it most difficult to love.
- **Be still**—do you have a few more minutes to sit in His presence?

Reflect

Have you any?
Have you any?
Have you any?

Fellowship means simply “things in common.”

On a scale of 1-10, where one is “hardly any” and 10 is “all things,” rate your fellowship with other believers in your life.

On a scale of 1-10, where one is “hardly any” and 10 is “all things,” rate your fellowship with Christ and His Spirit.

Why do you think our fellowship with one another often mirrors our relationship with Christ?

Consider someone who remains a challenge to you in the arena of fellowship. What is there about that person that Christ truly values?

Name one area in which you could learn from this person.

Name one way that you could serve him/her next week. Challenge yourself to do it!

Perspective:

A wise and experienced sage (Suzy Jeffrey) told me the week before my son's wedding: "Don't let anything, *anything*, **anything** get in the way of the pure delight of that weekend." I remembered those words, and they taught me. A brother couldn't come, the PowerPoint wouldn't run, I forgot my one assignment for the reception, a grandfather acted out a bit, and we barely had a bite to eat all day, but our family celebrated! We were together, and we had FUN! Not one issue surrounding any momentary trial lingers today. In fact, the wedding was perfect, the bride was beautiful, and the memories far out-valued the cost of that prized photo album. The success of the day required only one thing—that we loved each other; that's what really mattered!

In Philippians 1.12-30, Paul shared his perspective of some fairly dire circumstances. He was in prison, some fellow preachers had begun maligning his witness, and he did not know for sure the outcome of his upcoming trial—would he live or die? Still, he remained positive. His imprisonment had inspired other believers. And yes, men had begun preaching to compete with him and destroy his good name, but that was not **all** bad—Christ **was** being preached! And dying? He **preferred** to be with Jesus—though living meant more time with friends and fruitful labor. Only one thing actually concerned him—that his friends would stand strong and united with one purpose. If they did that.... Well, then nothing else mattered! He was good to go—a **happy** camper!

Unity—that's what really counts.

Agree in the Lord Unity matters

Silence, Solitude, & Prayer

I ask Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And I ask you, my faithful friend, to help these women.

Philippians 4:2-3; New Century Version

Praise and Prepare:

- Close your eyes and recognize God's presence.
- Ask Him to bless this time, to guard your heart, guide your mind, and grant you the opportunity to hear Him.

Study: Read Philippians in its entirety from the New Century Version (yellow copy). As you read, consider Paul's many statements, calling the Philippians to a strong, united stand.

Read 4:2-3. Make a list of everything you can know or surmise about Euodia and Syntyche. Include in this what you believe to be Paul's opinion of their standing with God and their station in the Philippian church.

Paul's exhorts these women to agree "**in the Lord**," a phrase that occurs 7 times in the letter. With the exception of this time, every other occurrence of the phrase is accompanied by a reference to joy or rejoicing. (Note these pairs: 2.19/2.17-18; 2.29/2.29; 3.1/3.1; 4.1/4.1; **4.2**; 4.4/4.4; 4.10/4.10.) Only here, at 4.2, is joy absent. How would you say that unity in the Lord relates to joy? When we compare and contrast the above verses, what might we surmise about the overall effect of controversy on the body of Christ?

There is a second request in this passage: “And I ask you, my faithful friend, to help these women.” This insertion is singularly curious in Paul’s writings to churches. Consider 2:14-16a and 4:5. Why do you suppose that the dispute between these two women warrants such unusual treatment? What is lost when squabbles exist in the church?

When Paul exhorts the women to “agree,” he is actually repeating a phrase he used in 2.2 (translated there as “having one mind.”) Read 2.1-4 again. What should the blessings in Christ motivate Christians to do?

There are many things we do not know about this dispute or the Christians involved. We do not know who is right or who agrees with whom. We do not even know the nature of the dispute itself. We do know that Paul himself does not take a side. In fact, he makes a point of constructing the sentence so that each woman is treated exactly the same. “Euodia I exhort and Syntyche I exhort to be of the same mind in the Lord,” the Greek reads. Why do you think we know so little about this disagreement? Consider Paul’s teachings in the rest of the book; how might you reason that these details are irrelevant to Paul’s purpose?

Pray:

- **Praise** God for your experience with Him this week.
- **Confess** again your desire to join Him in His work in the church.
- **Confess** the ways you might contribute to a weak spot in the unity of the church.
- **Thank Him** for the opportunity to know Him better through working with others.
- **Ask** God to assist you in standing firm and standing together with Him.
- **Be still**—do you have a few more minutes to sit in His presence?

Reflect

This week has been filled with opportunities to pray and to listen; to surrender and to celebrate, to let go of the past and to set goals for the future. What discoveries have you made about yourself this week?

What new thing has God whispered to you this week that you can carry with you as you leave?

What petty disputes should you be putting away?

How can you remind yourself daily not to let anything... *anything*...**anything** get in the way of rejoicing in the Lord?

Step-by-Step

The Come before Winter experience includes practicing “biblical exegesis.” This type of study is designed to let the Bible speak its own message. A foundational element of expository teaching, the process is sometimes called “inductive,” “contextual,” or “historical.”

We use this method, believing that if we invest in the Word of God--as it is written, in the context in which it is written--we will begin to hear God--individually, personally and “in His own words,” so to speak.

During the week, we will be seeking the heart of Jesus by listening intently to one of those chosen to reveal Him: Mark. We picked Mark for three reasons: First, Mark’s gospel is about Jesus. Few Christians would say they know the heart of Jesus well enough. Few Bibles are worn thin in the pages of the gospels. Secondly, we chose Mark because it is a gospel. Gospels offer special challenges that make them particularly appropriate as study texts. And finally, we chose Mark because it is short--the shortest of the gospels and the only one manageable enough for such a brief study.

Exegesis--
Greek; meaning
“to lead out of.”
In this type Bible study,
the student
studies in context,
so as to lead the meaning
of the teaching
straight out of
the biblical text.

We invite you to enter into this great experiment with us.

What would happen if we let God, through His Holy Spirit, be our teacher? What if we did not consult other books or commentaries until we were almost finished with our study? What could we discover from simply reading the Bible--in context? Is it possible that the Word of God can become a fascinating, enticing teacher that will light a new fire in us, a new energy for Bible study?

What we bring is not a “system” or a “new way to study the Bible.” Perhaps many of you study in this way already. What we propose is that this week we share in a study of Mark, using this “approach.” For those who have never studied in this way, we will share a few tools and ideas with you. However, we cannot “write the book” on this type study. Further, we will not “learn” this type study this week. Rather, we will practice it together. Our hope is that we will help one another to open the door to an experience in Mark, an experience in which God leads the way as He provides us with the “ears to hear” and the “eyes to see” His gospel to mankind.

The Approach in Brief:

- Step 1. Pray, read, seek, and listen (repeat often) (page 14)**
- Step 2. Uncover the context (page 15-16)**
- Step 3. Examine what is written (page 17-18)**
- Step 4. Determine the point being made (page 19)**
- Step 5. Apply the message to YOUR life (page 20)**
- Step 6. Organize your lesson (page 21)**

There is no substitute for reading the Bible. **The Bible is its own best interpreter.**

Step 1

OBJECT: Pray, read, seek, & listen (ask and answer your questions until you are satisfied)

Goal 1: Focus on preparing to hear God

- A. Pray** for your own spiritual growth and insight. Do you really want to know what this book is teaching?
- B. Read**, read, read! At first, don't try to analyze; just READ!
1. Repeatedly, in one sitting, and as often as possible.
 2. From a variety of translations.
 - a. Gain a broader perspective of nuances of the text.
 - b. Identify distinctive aspects of particular translations.
 - c. Investigate those verses that require further study.
- C. Determine (as best you can) the occasion of the writing**
1. Seek out the basic facts. Investigate the following aspects of the writing, examining both the writing itself and appropriate secondary sources.* This is for your information. Enjoy the investigation!
 - a. Position (in the biblical text as a whole)
 - b. Author
 - c. Time
 - d. Place
 - e. Intended readers and relationships
 - f. Type of writing or genre
- D. Listen! Read some more; try to hear the text; gradually become more analytical.**
1. Questions? Take note, consider, store them away, and keep reading!
 2. Every once in a while, take time to stop, listen, and think about your questions. Pray!
 3. Then...KEEP READING!

* **J**ust a note--

The introduction to a good commentary will provide insight into all of these basic facts for any book of the Bible. Bible handbooks are other good sources. Additionally, you can also do searches for such information at www.searchgodsword.org.

Understanding requires context—a **passage is one small part of a larger message**. The point of the larger message helps untangle the point of the passage.

Step 2

OBJECT: Uncover the context

Note: Various steps in this process are accompanied by worksheets. On this step, however, directions (rather than a worksheet) are provided. Those directions follow. (An outline resulting from such an examination appears on the next page.)

Goal 2: Locate the major sections in the book

- A. Look for the natural movements in the writing for initial clues** (see Diagram 1, p. 17)
1. Transitional words
 - Time shifts
 - Movements
 - Conclusions
 2. Linked words, ideas, or events
 - Repetitions
 - Similarities
 - Contrasts/Comparisons
- B. Define, if you can, the pieces of the writing in the book.** What are the building blocks the writer uses to make his points? Does the writing divide into introductions, points, examples, and conclusions? Where do each of these pieces begin and end?
- C. Hypothesize about where major sections might begin and end** (based on your conclusions from 1 & 2 above.) Try to group these stories, points, examples, and conclusions. Remain open-minded. How might these pieces function together to develop a point?
- D. Consider themes as a preliminary exercise; don't get bogged down.** What do all these stories/passages have in common? How are they connected? How do they differ? How does the argument progress? Is there a thesis passage or do the stories somehow link together to make bold theological statements?
- E. Check outlines in commentary introductions** (don't use the textual helps at this time) or those in study Bibles. Look up at least the first and last verse of each section they reference to see if you can follow the reasoning. Do you agree with the divisions? How would you adjust them? Why would you adjust them?
- F.** Often, one enters the biblical text wanting to explore or exegete a particular passage. In this material, that passage will be called the **focus text**. **Locate your focus text in regard to the divisions in the book** (see outline on next page or Appendix F, the copy of Philippians on pages 29-34). The major section in which your text lies will be called its **broader context** (see next page or Appendix F, page 29-34).
- G. Identify the narrower context for your focus text**—those sentences which work together with the **focus text** to form one unit of thought in the broader context. Use Appendix F, pages 29-34, to identify what you believe to be the narrow context of the focus passage. This is the section on which you will focus your most intense study.
- H. Outline the broader context.** Identify the other subsections that work together to make the point of the broader context. How does your focus passage fit into the broader argument/theme of this section?

Locate the major sections

OUTLINE FOR STUDY

Major sections in Philippians

A structural outline for the book of Philippians, a friendly letter from Paul and Timothy.

I. Introduction (1.1-11)

- A. Salutation (1.1-2)
- B. Prayer for the recipients (1.3-11)
 - 1. Thanksgiving (1.3-8)
 - 2. Petition (1.9-11)

II. Reassurance about the sender (1.12-26)

- A. Paul's imprisonment; spread of the gospel (1.12-14)
- B. Contrasting preachers of the gospel (1.14-18a)
- C. Paul's anticipated deliverance (1.18b-26)

III. Concern for the recipients (1.27-2:18)

A. To express unity and courage in the face of opposition (1.27-30)

Theme Passage	<i>Only one thing matters:</i> live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel... 1.27
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- B. To manifest unity and humility after the manner of Christ (2.1-11)
- C. To work for wholeness and faithfulness as a community (2.12-18)

IV. Travel plans and Christ-like examples (2.19-30)

- A. The coming of Timothy (2.19-23)
- B. The coming of Paul (2.24)
- C. The coming of Epaphroditus (2.25-30)

V. Further exhortation through contrasting models (3.1-4:3)

Broader
Context

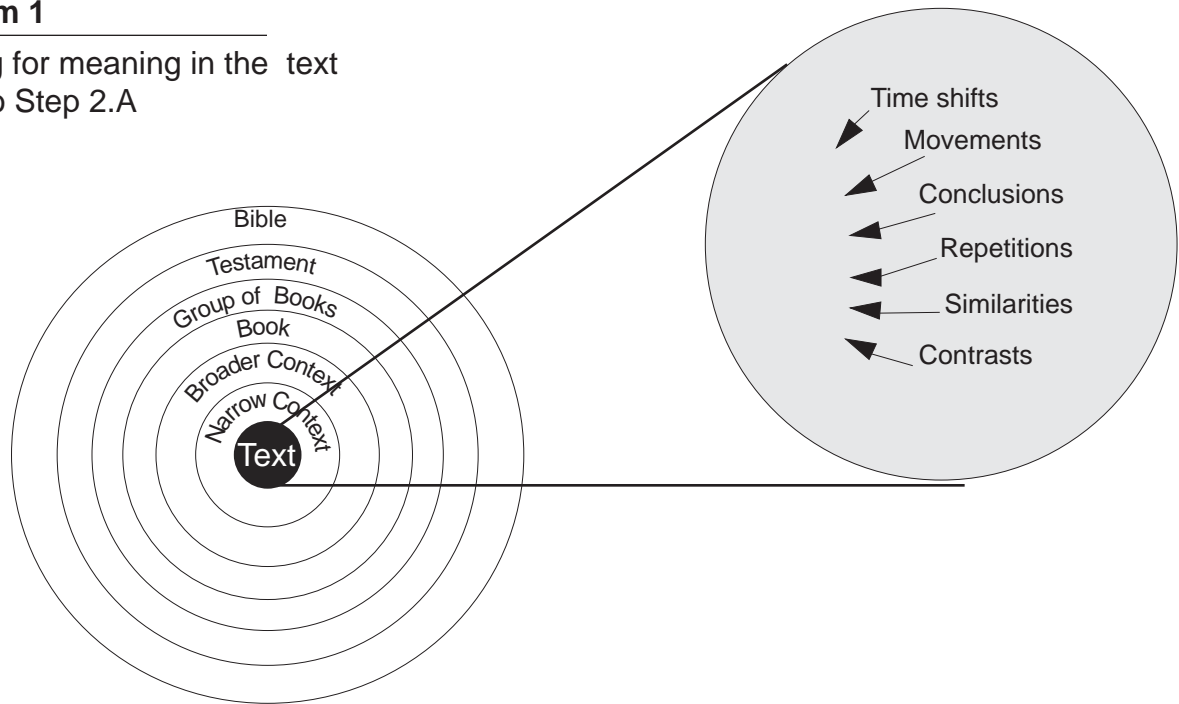
Focus Text	Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind, and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. 3.15-16
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VI. Closing (4.4-23)

- A. Final exhortations (4.4-9)
- B. The matter of giving and receiving (4.10-20)
- C. Greetings (4.21-22)
- D. Benediction (4.23)

Diagram 1

Looking for meaning in the text
Refer to Step 2.A



Finding meaning in the biblical text

Only after you have examined the text in its context are you able to scrutinize its contents without losing the proper perspective. Take a good look!

Step 3

OBJECT: Examine what is written

Goal #3: Learn to be a careful reader (Worksheet 1, page 35, might help.)

A. Notice the words in the passage or section

1. Notice the repetitions (including frequency of)
 - a. Words.
 - b. Similar phrases or ideas
2. Consider the verbs.
 - a. Do they point out action?
 - b. Do they offer advice?
 - c. Do they speak to the state of being?
3. Note the comparisons & contrasts (of individual words, groups of words, phrases, ideas)
4. Locate transitional words.
 - a. Do they indicate time shifts?
 - b. Do they introduce movement (either geographical and physical)?
 - c. Do they highlight conclusions?
 - d. Do they earmark structure?

Learn to be a careful reader, continued

4. Examine the significant words (also places, phrases, or concepts).
 - a. What does this word (or phrase) actually mean?
 - b. Where else do we read of this place?
 - c. Consider its use in writings by the same author or in a similar time?
 - d. Consider its other appearances in the New Testament?
 - e. Consider its other appearances in the Old Testament?

B. Inspect the sentences

1. Is a question involved? If so, how is it answered?
 - a. By direct response?
 - b. In a story (or parable)?
 - c. With a biblical reference?
 - d. By comparison?
 - e. Other?
2. Consider the construction of the text. Why might the author have organized his thoughts in this way?
 - a. To define concepts?
 - b. To expose deeper meaning?
 - c. To create an image?
 - d. To mark a theme?
3. Look for summations.
 - a. Look back at your transitional words (see A4 above).
 - b. Can you use these words to help you outline/understand the text? Do they?
 - i. Provide keys to structure.
 - ii. Summarize the heart of the author's message.
 - iii. Flag key points in the development of a theme.

C. Use the details you have collected to help you look for themes

1. Back off from the details and think.
 - a. What ideas or points most often appear here?
 - b. What ideas or points stand out as significant? Why?
 - c. How do these points work together?
2. Attempt to trace the theme through the section or book.
 - a. How does the passage contribute to the development of the theme?
 - b. How does the passage support the concepts already presented?
 - c. How is the passage biblically consistent overall?
 - d. What are fundamental principles that apply to all of life?

* **J**ust a note--

Finding themes:

Themes emerge from single words on flat pages when one begins to see patterns and emphases in the details of study. Often, we collect the details of knowledge, but do not take the time to back off far enough from the material to see the collective point being made.

Once you have examined the details, you must attempt to calculate the sum of **all** the facts.

The gospels are full of men and women who witnessed the miracles of Jesus and heard His teaching. They followed Him, crowding in so closely that He could not even find the time to eat. They "saw" it all; but they did not have "ears to hear" or "eyes to see." They were blind.

In the 21st century, we are no more likely to "see" or "hear" than they. We too are in danger of witnessing the story without the experience. Finding themes helps us grasp the message.

A theme emerges from the details as one of the main ideas. Working with this method, you will collect the information you need to help you begin to discover the themes in the book you are studying. Pray about this. You will find many themes in the passages. In the Bible, these themes are interconnected and often repeated. Thinking about a book's themes in light of the Bible's overall teaching will reap an even more abundant harvest. ka

Teachers make a serious mistake when they collect a lot of information, but never determine the POINT. We make a near fatal mistake when we teach that information, rather than ONE POINT.

Step 4

OBJECT: Determine the point being made

GOALS 4. A–D: Reflect, synthesize, explore, pray, and listen (Worksheet 2, page 36, might help.)

A. Reflect. Reexamine the information you collected. Reflect.

1. Consider the situation once more in light of your more recent study. Do you have further insights? What circumstance(s) did you discover in the narrow context that seem to act as background for this passage?
2. Look over worksheet 1 (p. 35).
 - a. How do the oft repeated words and phrases fit the passage as well as the larger context(s)?
 - b. How do the details in the text (the linked phrases, the verbs, verb forms and comparisons and contrasts) convey meaning for the passage and its larger context(s)?
 - c. What is the answer to the question asked in the text, if there was one?
 - d. What were the summation points in the passage? What did they emphasize?
 - e. Can you identify a main point for the passage itself?
3. Do the parts fit together? Test your conclusions.
 - a. How does the teaching in this passage advance the teaching of the broader context?
 - b. How does this teaching support concepts already presented?
 - c. Is the teaching biblically consistent overall?

B. Synthesize (Worksheet 2, pg. 36, part 2).

1. Run a self test. Details may escape us, but we remember substance. Back off from the details of your study for awhile—a day or two is not too long, if you have the time. While away from your notes and the text, ask yourself:
 - a. What seems important to me? What points stand out as significant?
 - b. What have I learned?
 - c. How do these points work together?
 - d. What do I see as the primary point in this text?
2. Try to write in one sentence the main point of this passage.

C. Explore. Enjoy a lengthy conversation with others who have studied this text. When you have access to the materials, you may want to examine the details found in secondary resources (e.g., commentaries). Compare their findings with yours.

1. Discover new applications you have not considered.
2. Add to your list of illustrations.
3. Find further support for your findings.
4. Make adjustments, if you find the need.

D. Pray, wait, and keep listening (Worksheet 2, pg. 36, part 3).

A recent study indicated that less than one of ten Christian teenagers who have attended church and possess a fair amount of Bible knowledge, are able to translate that knowledge into life situations.

Step 5

OBJECT: Apply the message to YOUR life

Goal 5: Reflect, synthesize, explore, pray, and listen—some more (Worksheet 3, page 37)

A vast difference exists between head knowledge and a heart given to Jesus. An enormous gulf flows between one who knows about God and one who knows God.

We can learn, even teach, without engaging our lives. Yet a disciple's credibility resides in her influence. She would do better to muddle the facts and model the concept than to know all the right information and live an empty life. ***One cannot emphasize this enough, for in knowing Him, true renewal occurs.***

- A. Identify the fundamental human conditions (that never change) addressed in this passage.**
- B. Identify one or two recent and specific situations that prove that neither you nor your culture have mastered the concepts, attitudes, and relational issues found in this passage.**
 1. In your own life first
 2. In the life of your family
 3. In the life of your friends
 4. In the life of your church body
 5. In society as a whole
- C. Describe a situation similar to those in each of the above categories which you are likely to encounter this week.**
- D. Meditate on the main point you identified in the passage you studied in light of the above situations. How does this truth impact the specific situations you identified in “B” above?**
- E. *Imagine yourself living out this principle. How will it look next week (in the specific situations you identified) when you apply the principle(s) you learned in this text?***

Step 6

OBJECT: Organize your sharing

Goal 6: Plan what you will share with the group

Thursday's sharing represents one of the highlights of a Come before Winter renewal. Each of you will own three minutes of the day to share--ever so briefly--what the Lord has revealed to you during your time with Him this week.

- A. Read the broader context** (Ph. 3.1–4.3) **once more, focusing on the narrower context you selected.**

- B. Read the sentence you wrote** (Worksheet 2, 4C, page 36) **and reflect on your reasons for highlighting this point.**
 - 1. What in your study has influenced you to read the passage as you do?
 - 2. What did you “hear” in the text that may have made a difference in your reading of this passage?
 - 3. Are you satisfied with your work?

- C. Reflect once more on your practical application(s) for the week** (see Worksheet 3, page 37).
 - 1. Consider all the many applications you might make next week, given what God has shown you this week.
 - 2. Which application will help you to make the most significant use of your learning?
 - 3. Confession often becomes a part of our sharing as we unload burdens we have carried far too long. Take a moment or two for prayer; be honest with God, confessing. Don't carry one extra bag with you when you leave!

- D. Write your application, your “Monday Meaning” in the appropriate portion of Worksheet 3, #4, page 37.**

Standing *firm* Standing *&* *together*

A lesson on Philippians
Jeanene Reese

The letter to the Philippian church is written about conflict on three levels

A. Paul's own situation while writing this book

1. He is in a Roman prison—we are unsure as to **why** he is there.
2. He is continually concerned for the gospel in all of this trouble.
3. He is confident even though he is concerned for the young Christians.
4. He is in a life and death dilemma.

B. The Philippian church was founded under unusual circumstances that quickly grew into conflict and suffering.

1. Paul receives a strange call to Macedonia.
2. Meeting the women near the river; Lydia and her house become Christians.
3. The slave-girl who tells fortunes follows, saying that Paul and Silas are from God. Paul casts the demon within her out; her owners are furious and drag Paul and Silas before the authorities.
4. Paul and Silas are stripped and beaten and thrown in jail, heavily bound.
5. At midnight an earthquake strikes; the men are freed, and a terrified jailer threatens suicide.
6. Paul and Silas reassure the jailer, then teach him the gospel.
7. The jailer and his family are baptized; the next morning the magistrates are horrified to discover that Paul is a Roman citizen!
8. The authorities, apologetic for the beating and imprisonment, order Paul and his company out of the city immediately. He visits the new Christians only briefly.
9. Paul deeply loves the Philippians, struggling for leaving them unattended.

C. Paul instructs them about living as Christians in the midst of conflict—Ph. 1.27–30.

1. **The image of citizenship:** “Only one thing matters”—living life in a “manner worthy of the gospel.”
2. **The image is of athletics:** stand firm in one spirit.
3. **The image of the military:** strive side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, not intimidated by opponents.
4. **The image of full participation** in the very nature of God: He has “graciously granted you the privilege, not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear I still have.”
 - a. Suffering here is suffering from the hands of someone or something—a very real conflict. Suffering is part of believing—it is what it means to be one with Christ.
 - b. Three encouragements are given:
 - 1). **Suffering proves salvation**—it also indicates the destruction of the enemy, those who are evil.
 - 2). **Suffering is considered a privilege**—the word struggle here expresses agony like Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22.44).
 - 3). **Suffering is a shared experience**—other Christians share in it with us. Paul suffers in this book, but others do, as well.

Understanding the nature of the epistle

APPENDIX B

As we are following our step by step approach for studying the Bible, the question of the type of writing being examined (See Step 1, C.f., p. 22) is always a critical one. In the case of an ancient letter it is also important to ask what type of letter is being written. Even though letters are not narratives in the same way that Gospels are, they still have a story to tell. The letter is one piece in that story that offers us insights as to what is going on.

Classifying the epistle helps us better understand the author's intention and allows readers an opportunity to hear the message with even greater clarity. Thousands of examples of ancient letters exist and a basic formula that fits many of them consists of six parts:¹

1. name of the writer
2. name of the recipient
3. greeting
4. prayer wish or thanksgiving
5. body
6. final greeting and farewell

An author's variation of this basic outline can provide the reader insight into the type of epistle being written. For example, in the book of Galatians Paul includes the first three parts of this outline but omits the prayer wish or thanksgiving. Instead he moves immediately to a statement of judgment that tells us he is not happy with this church and how they are responding to the gospel (Gal. 1.6ff). In contrast, as he writes to the Philippians, the apostle has a rather extended prayer wish and thanksgiving, telling us that he has a different purpose in writing this letter.

Although most of us would be able to make this simple observation in comparing two of Paul's epistles, it is not enough information for us to use in classifying the letter. Further reading of the text makes it clear that Paul has a meaningful relationship with the Christians in Philippi and yet he is writing to instruct them about their need for greater Christlikeness. These insights move us closer to a possible understanding of Paul's intentions and so to classifying the letter. Most of us, however, will need the help of good commentaries, dictionaries/encyclopedias, handbooks, or books about ancient letters, in order to fully understand how to classify the epistles. For this study in Philippians, we will consider it a horatory letter of friendship or an exhortation to close friends.

Friendship in the ancient world differed markedly from our present-day understanding of it. For both Greek and Roman philosophers, friendship was the "glue" that held society together and was based primarily on virtue. In this context friends had a common mind, wished good for the other simply because of the friendship, and participated in the reciprocal sharing of goods with one another. All of these qualities are evident in Paul's relationship with the Philippians and the greatest possible virtue for the believer bound them—the desire to be like the Christ depicted in the central hymn (2.6-11).

Throughout his letter, Paul challenges his readers precisely on what it means for them to live out this Christlikeness (1.27; 2.2-4, 12-15; 4.4-6, 8-9). One of the more unusual patterns of exhortation found in Philippians, however, is the use of models to persuade readers towards the injunctions given. Following the structure of ancient rhetoric, Paul provides both positive and negative examples to embody both the life he is calling the Philippians to live and the one that he wants them to avoid at all cost.

The outline on the previous page reflects both the structural parallels found in familial letters and the prominence of models used in exhortation.²

(Footnotes)

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan: 1993), pp. 46-7.

² Charles B. Cousar, *Reading Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, (Macon: Smyth & Helwys: 2001), p. 129.

Synthesize the details regarding an epistle

Circumstances or situations: Consider all you have learned in your exploration of the basic facts surrounding the writing of the book of Philippians. Discuss the following questions to help you to determine what specific situations or circumstances (might have) prompted the writing of this book?

1. The letter as a piece of mail

- Does this letter represent an initial communication or a response to a communication?
- When was the first letter in this exchange written? How much time passed between the first letter and this one?"
- Who opened this exchange?
- What do you know about this person/group?
- What do you know about the initial communication?
- What would you say was the intended message of that person/group's communication?
- How was the original communication sent?
- Was there a relationship between the sender and the carrier? What was that relationship?
- Do you know anything about the reason for the elapsed time between these two communications? In other words, do we know why the response was offered so quickly or why it took so long?
- How was this letter delivered?
- What do you know about the timing of this response? Why now?

2. The letter and its intended purpose

- What can be determined about this writer's reaction to the first communication?
- Who are some of the characters mentioned in the letter?
- What is the relationship between each of these characters and the writer?
- What is the relationship between each of these characters and the intended readers?
- What are some of the most repeated ideas in this letter?
- Using those repetitions as a guide, what would you say the writer intended to be the most significant communications of this writing?
- What do these points tell you about the writer's purpose for writing?
- What do these points tell you about the situation to which he was writing?

Other biblical references to Philippi:

Acts 16.6–18.5
1 Thessalonians 2.2

Author: Generally accepted as a genuine letter of Paul.

Time: If it was during the time of his Roman imprisonment,* then it would be 60–62 AD

Observations from Acts:

Consider the following incidents in Paul's ministry prior to his arrival in Philippi.

- Stephen died and a great persecution of Christians resulted. The church scattered and the message spread. Many Gentiles turned to the Lord. News reached the church in Jerusalem; they sent Barnabas to Antioch. He, in turn, called Paul (11.19–26).
- Hearing of the need of Christians in Jerusalem, the brothers in Antioch sent a gift, expressing their fellowship in Christ (11.27–30).
- At the direction of the Holy Spirit, the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (13.2–3), where they spoke boldly for the Lord (14.3).
- In Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead (14.19), but God continues to use him to convert Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas taught the new believers, strengthening them and encouraging them to remain true to the faith, saying, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” With prayer and fasting, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders and “committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust” (14.19–23).
- Men came from Jerusalem to Antioch, teaching the new converts that Gentile believers must be circumcised in order to be saved. Strongly disagreeing, Paul and Barnabas took this question to the leaders in Jerusalem (15.1–2).
 - Therefore, when Paul taught about the “dogs” in Philippians, one must keep in mind his encounters in both Lystra and in Antioch regarding whether Gentile converts must be circumcised. He had taken this matter before the leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 15), and when he entered Philippi in Acts 16, he carried a letter from the Council, stating, “We should not bother the non-Jewish brothers who have turned to God (15.19), except with minimal instructions,”
 - Do not eat food sacrificed to idols
 - Do not take part in any kind of sexual sin
 - Do not taste blood
 - Do not eat animals that have been strangled
 - This was to be done out of respect for those who were taught the law of Moses and who had heard his words in synagogues on every Sabbath (15.21)

*See “Regarding the location of Paul’s imprisonment” on the next page.

In light of Paul's teachings in Philippians, consider these things:

- When Paul and Barnabas decided to leave Jerusalem to revisit the churches, they had a sharp disagreement and determined they could not continue working together (15.36–40). This seems particularly significant in light of the teaching on unity in Philippians.
- Despite the letter, he carried, Paul circumcised Timothy “to please the Jews” (16.3).
- Paul saw the vision of the man from Macedonia which led him to Philippi. There he encountered a group of God-fearing women, praying at the river on the Sabbath. His first convert was a woman, Lydia (16.6–15).
 - For a community to have a synagogue, a minimum of ten Jewish men were required. Since there was no synagogue in Philippi, the Jewish population was probably very small. The women at the river were likely a mix of Jews and “God fearers.” God fearers were Gentiles who practiced Jewish worship but had not been fully proselytized.
 - There is good evidence that the women of Macedonia played a much more significant role in public life than in most Greco-Roman cities of antiquity (Fee, *Philippians*, p. 26). Lydia, a merchant selling a rare purple cloth from her hometown of Thyatira was probably wealthy. She owned a home large enough to take in Paul and his companions. Fee suggests that perhaps Euodia and Syntyche could have been a part of her household.
 - The girl, whose healing sent Paul and Silas to jail, would have been a member of the slave class, and Fee reasons the jailer of 16.25–34 would have been an artisan. Therefore, Fee surmises that the congregation in Philippi would have been like most others—a grouping of various classes.

The future Philippian church

A letter from Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, fifty years after Paul's visit to Philippi, provides a later glimpse of the church Paul was seeking to encourage in Philippians. The letter expressed joy that the Philippians “have followed the example of true love and have helped on their way, as opportunity offered, those who were bound in chains.” Such chains, Polycarp says, are an ornament for saints; they are the “diadems of those who have been truly chosen by God and our Lord. I rejoice also that your firmly rooted faith, renowned since early days, endures to the present and produces fruit for our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Regarding the location of Paul's imprisonment:

Scholars consider three cities as possibilities for the location of Paul's imprisonment as he wrote to the Philippians—Rome, Ephesus, and Caesarea. Many of these arguments revolve around the presence of a Praetorian Guard mentioned in Philippians 1.13.

Rome

- The Praetorian Guard was the emperor's personal bodyguard, therefore, Rome was the most likely location.
- If Paul was imprisoned in Rome, his case would have been heard by Nero. It would have been exhilarating for him to see how the gospel was spreading in Rome due to his presence.
- Paul was sent to Rome early in 60 AD; he remained there for two years. The charge for his arrest in Jerusalem was one of violating the sanctity of the temple. That would be easily rebutted in Rome. There would be no reason for him to fear death for this charge in Rome. However, in Acts 24.5, mention is made of a charge for disturbing the Roman peace throughout the provinces. This was a serious charge; despite Paul's reply there was no means of knowing how it would be handled before an imperial tribunal.
- Some scholars find a problem with the Rome location: If he was in Rome, and the charges were as serious as he indicated in Philippians, possibly resulting in his death, how could he fully expect to be released (Phil. 1.25–27; 2.24)?

Ephesus

- “Praetorian” was used to designate the headquarters of a provincial governor who had military units under his command.
- In citing Ephesus as the location of Paul’s imprisonment, modern scholars point to three archeological inscriptions in Latin found in the region of Ephesus, claiming that they indicate the presence of a praetorian guard there. FF Bruce, however, argues that these inscriptions are misinterpreted—both in date and location. He writes that the praetorian referred to was a former member of the praetorian guard who, after his service in the guard, served as a “stationarius”—a copier of important documents—along a “Roman road in the province of Asia”—possibly near Ephesus. Bruce writes further: “There is no instance in imperial times of its [the Greek word praetorium used in Ph. 1.13] use for the headquarters of proconsul, the governor of a senatorial province such as Asia was at this time.”

Caesarea

- **In favor of Caesarea.** We know that Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years, waiting for Felix to reach a decision—Acts 24.26, 27 (AD 47–49). If this was the imprisonment that Paul experiences in Philippi, this would account for his optimism that he would be released because this is the imprisonment that grew out of the lesser charges in Jerusalem. Additionally, we have the expressed statement in Acts 23.35 that Paul was kept under guard there “in Herod’s palace”—which was literally a *praetorium*. This was an official building set up by Herod the Great on the artificial acropolis that he had constructed for the new city of Caesarea between 22 and 12 BC. It appears to have served as headquarters for the Roman procurator of Judea. Since the procurator had auxiliary cohorts under his command, his headquarters could have been properly designated a *praetorium*.
- **Evidence AGAINST Caesarea:** Caesarea was an insignificant city. If Paul was there, why would there be glory resulting from his imprisonment so that by now his presence had served to make all the guard aware of Christ and as a result cause the advancement of the gospel? (See Phil. 1.15–18)

Philippians in its Contexts

APPENDIX E/New Revised Standard

Introduction

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the
bishops and deacons:
²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ. ³I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴
constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of
you, ⁵because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until
now. ⁶I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work
among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.
⁷It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you
hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me,
both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of
the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with
the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this is my prayer, that your
love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight
¹⁰to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ
you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹having produced the harvest of
righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and
praise of God.

Reassurance about the sender

¹²I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me
has actually helped to spread the gospel, ¹³so that it has become
known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else
that my imprisonment is for Christ; ¹⁴and most of the brothers and
sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprison-
ment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without
fear.

¹⁵Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from
goodwill. ¹⁶These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have
been put here for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷the others proclaim
Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to in-
crease my suffering in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What does it matter?
Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of
false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that through
your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn
out for my deliverance. ²⁰It is my eager expectation and hope that I
will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with
all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body,

whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵ Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶ so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Concern for the recipients

²⁷ Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹ For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— ³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

2 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without murmuring and arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. ¹⁶ It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you— ¹⁸ and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

Travel plans and Christlike examples

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹ All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But Timothy's worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. ²³ I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; ²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.

²⁵ Still, I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—my brother and co-worker and fellow soldier, your messenger and minister to my need; ²⁶ for he has been longing for all of you, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. ²⁷ He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another. ²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, in order that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹ Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honor such people, ³⁰ because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me.

Broader Context begins

Further exhortation through contrasting models

3 Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.

To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of

We often enter a book through a specific passage. As we seek its context, not only does the book unfold but the text becomes clear.

*One of the first steps in carefully examining any text is to determine its various contexts. For the purposes of this week, we have divided Philippians into broad sections and assigned your **focus text** (Phil. 3.15–16).*

1. Carefully examine the broader context. It is labeled and double spaced.
2. Identify the boundaries of a narrower context on which you will focus as you seek to discover the fuller meaning of 3.15–16.
3. Extend the dotted line below to visually indicate the text you select.

Broader Context Continues

Narrower Context

focus text

those who mutilate the flesh! ³For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— ⁴even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵**Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.** ¹⁶**Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.**

¹⁷ Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Closing

Broader Context ends

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

¹⁵ You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. ¹⁶ For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. ¹⁸ I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Examine what is written

WORKSHEET 1

Examples from Philippians

Notice repetitions (& frequency of)

Words: Ex.: If you have any encouragement...any comfort...any fellowship...any tenderness and compassion, 2:1

Similar phrases or ideas: Ex.: one spirit; side by side; one

Verbs/verb forms

Example: For he has granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him, as well...1.29

Comparisons/contrasts

For them this is evidence of their destruction, but your salvation...1.28

Transitional Words

so that, whether I come... 1.27; For he has graciously granted...1.29

Significant words, places, phrases, or concepts. palace guard (or praetorium guard) 1.13; day of Christ; the circumcision

Question(s): "What does it matter?" 1.18

Answers: Just this: that Christ is proclaimed in every way...1.18

Get the main point

WORKSHEET 2

Reflect, synthesize, explore, pray and listen

1. **Reflect: Consider the section you are studying. Ask God to help you see it more clearly.**

2. **Synthesize: Ponder questions similar to these and ask for greater understanding**
 - a. What do each of the texts in this section have in common?
 - b. Which segments of the section do not seem to fit? Why?
 - c. How has the story advanced from the beginning to the end of this section? How did the author communicate these changes in the story?
 - d. What happens immediately after this section and before it?
 - e. Where did this book begin and how does it end?
 - f. This book is about...
 - g. The section I am studying is about...
 - h. The passage I am studying adds to the meaning of the story by...
 - i. I am more prepared for the end of the book after studying this section because...

3. **Pray and listen:**
 - a. Ask God to help you see this writer's purpose more clearly so that you might recognize the point of the passage you are studying.
 - b. Leave it (at least overnight, a day or two is not too long). Don't labor with it any longer.
 - c. When it comes to mind, pray; ask God to make it plain and simple in your mind, but don't try to figure it out any longer.
 - d. When you go to sleep that night, ask yourself, "What have I learned that is truly significant?" Thank God for those insights. Ask God to shine His light on the text so that you may see it clearly.

4. **Find the point:** Though we will never know fully everything that could be discovered from a text, we can come to a point where we are able to say this: "Today, after study, prayer, and listening, this passage means ... to me."
 - a. After you have spent some time away from the detailed notes of your study (at least over night), ask yourself again: What have I learned that is truly significant? Write these things down. Resist the temptation to go back to your notes. Just be quiet and see what comes up.
 - b. Look at your list.
 - i. Do these things have anything in common?
 - ii. How are they communicated to you in the text?
 - iii. If you had to nail down ONE teaching that seems most significant in this text, what would it be?
 - c. Struggle to write that point in ONE sentence. At least be able to say what you have learned in 15 to 45 seconds.

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